

**NORTH MILWAUKEE TOWN HALL AND FIRE STATION
5151 NORTH 35TH STREET**

**A BRIEF HISTORY
AND
PRESERVATION GUIDELINES**

Because of its significance as a municipal building for the former village/city of North Milwaukee it is recommended that the owners apply for local historic designation to protect the building for future generations. Likewise, since the building will require rehabilitation, historic tax credits can be beneficial in helping to defray the cost of renovations. Tax credits are tied to National and State Register listing. To inquire about eligibility please check the website www.wisconsinhistory.org and type in "tax credits". The State Historic Preservation Office manages the historic tax credit program.

A BRIEF HISTORY

This very distinctive building once served as the North Milwaukee Town Hall and Fire Station. North Milwaukee was a separate and distinct municipality that developed north of the City of Milwaukee. In the 1890s the construction of the Wisconsin Central and the Milwaukee Road railroad lines catapulted the sleepy farming hamlet of Schwartzburg into an industrial town complete with its own factories, shopping district, school system, parks and recreational areas. The new town, four miles north of the City of Milwaukee, was bordered by W. Congress Street, West Silver Spring Drive, North 27th Street and North Sherman Boulevard.

The community that grew here incorporated into a village in 1897. To serve village governmental functions, this \$6,000 structure was completed in 1901 and housed the fire department, jail, janitor's quarters, a 40 foot by 57 foot council chamber, committee rooms, library and offices for the village government. The village hired Milwaukee architects Leenhouts and Guthrie to design the distinctive building.

North Milwaukee became a city in 1918 and was later annexed by the City of Milwaukee on January 1, 1929.

Under City of Milwaukee ownership, the building served as quarters for Engine Company No. 37 and Ladder Company No. 15 from 1929 to 1931 after which both companies moved to new quarters at 5174 North Hopkins Street. After its use as a city firehouse, the building was used as a ward yard for the sanitation department.

The old North Milwaukee Town Hall and Fire Station was later sold by the city, and then re-acquired by the city on several occasions. It is currently owned by the City of Milwaukee.

The building is highly eclectic in style. It features a prominent Palladian entry, a type of form popular at the time of its construction, based on Renaissance origins. Detailed sheet metal and stone trim reflect classical prototypes. The shaped gable at the parapet, in contrast, is very European in origin and can be found in many German Renaissance Revival buildings both in Milwaukee and in the "Old Country". The domed cupola is also a nod to that European heritage.

The fact that a large portion of the population of North Milwaukee was of German origin may have inspired the architects to produce this design.

PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the City of Milwaukee regarding this significant property. It is essential that the building retains its historic appearance. Consultation with the City's Historic Preservation staff on exterior rehabilitation is required to ensure appropriate practices are followed.

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape. The domed cupola is meant to be the prominent feature at the roofline. It must remain visible in its entirety. No rooftop additions or additional stories are to be added as they will obscure the prominence of the cupola. Skylights are discouraged but may be added to roof surfaces if they are not visible from the street or public right of way. There appears to be a skylight on the south elevation. If original it can be repaired and can remain.

Locate mechanical systems and vents on portions of the roof not visible from the public right of way and paint them out to minimize impact. Retain existing chimneys that are original to the building. The construction of any penthouses on the roof is discouraged, as it would change the visual interpretation of the building and compete with the domed cupola.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

- a. Unpainted brick, terra cotta, or stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural terra cotta or stone. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date. Do not paint the red brick at the front façade or the cream brick at the sides and rear. It appears that the column capitals at the front façade are stone. They can be scraped to remove loose paint and then repainted. They are not to be removed or covered over.
- b. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. See the masonry chapters in the books As Good As New or Good For Business for explanations on why the use of a proper mortar mix is crucial to making lasting repairs that will not contribute to new deterioration of the masonry. There are places on the building where repointing will be required including the front façade, north and west walls. The east wall is covered by vines. A condition assessment will need to be made once the vines are removed from the east wall of the building.

- c. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting or high pressure water blasting or the use of other abrasive materials (soda, nut shells, etc.) on limestone, terra cotta, brick, or cream brick surfaces is prohibited. Any cleaning with approved masonry cleaning chemicals should be done by experienced individuals. Consultation with historic preservation staff is required before any cleaning would begin.
- d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed. Although some parging of the brick had occurred on the rear or west elevation and is deteriorating, this is not an appropriate treatment. Brick can be replaced as needed with salvaged cream color brick and re-pointed appropriately.

Identify the cause for the vertical cracking at the northwest corner of the building. Repair masonry at that location using appropriate repair methods.

2. Wood/Metal

- a. The front sheet metal cornice is a significant part of the façade's design. It is not to be removed. Needed repairs can be carried out by professional sheet metal/roofing contractors and has been done successfully on other historic properties. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance such as the dome of the cupola and all of the sheet metal trim including the main entry trim and the trim at the shaped gable.
- b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that do not duplicate the appearance of the original materials. Covering wood, metal or stone trim with aluminum or vinyl is not permitted.

C. Windows and Doors

Windows and doors are among the most important features of a building and in one sense can be viewed as the jewelry of a building. At present, only the windows on the front façade are visible. All others have been boarded over or filled in with masonry in past years.

Doors likewise provide the focal point of the exterior. Many manufacturers now make historically appropriate doors for buildings such as this one. Such doors are not typically found at the big box stores and generally do not fit the historic openings on historic properties. Historic Preservation staff can assist with the selection of appropriate doors that fit the style and historic openings of the building.

1. FRONT FAÇADE WINDOWS

Historic photos show that the windows at the front façade originally consisted of cottage style sash with leaded glass upper panes. Cottage style refers to windows where the upper sash is shorter than the lower sash. These appear to be intact today. Repair and retain the existing historic wood windows at the front, including the leaded glass upper sash. Historic Preservation staff can assist with contractors who can restore the windows and provide weatherstripping as well as appropriate storm windows. Retain and repair the tapered columns between the windows and do not remove capitals or bases. Some of the round windows or oculi have been filled in to allow for venting. It is preferable to have those vents removed and glass be re-installed in the openings.

SIDE AND REAR WINDOWS

Windows on the side and rear walls are not visible. All have been boarded over. Some window openings have been filled in with masonry in the past and can remain as is.

If original windows exist under the boarding they are to be retained. If windows do not exist or are badly deteriorated, new wood windows can be installed that fit the existing openings. Permanently blocking up window openings with glass block or concrete block is not allowed. Should any window openings require permanent enclosure, careful infill with cream color brick may be allowed if there a slight 1 ½ to 2 inch reveal that still allows the opening to be identified as a window opening. Shrinking down window openings to insert smaller windows is not allowed. Likewise, enlarging existing openings to fit new stock windows is not allowed. Maintaining the historic arrangement of glass panes, sash size, surrounds (brick mold) and sills will preserve the proportions of the building as intended by the architect.

If storm windows are to be used, make sure the storm windows or protective glazing will have glazing configurations similar to the prime windows and not obscure the prime windows.

The windows on the south elevation are not visible due to the proximity of the adjacent building. Should that adjacent building be removed in the future, the south elevation will become very visible to the public. The same requirements regarding wood windows and new windows applies to the window openings on this elevation.

2. Respect the building's stylistic period. If the replacement of doors or window sash is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design and material of the original window sash or door. Avoid using modern style window units, such as horizontal sliding sash or casements, in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building. Vinyl, vinyl clad, fiberglass or metal and metal clad prime window units are not permitted. The removal of leaded glass windows is not allowed.

3. DOORS AT THE FRONT FAÇADE

The front entry at the front façade must retain its appearance as an entry and not be blocked over. If original doors are present, they are to be retained and repaired as needed. The garage door openings must be retained. Both were originally arched. The opening on the right or north has been squared off. It can remain although restoring the arch is preferable. Appropriate garage doors are required for the openings and would consist of panels and upper windows. If the space behind the garage doors will be used for vehicles, the doors can be operable. If the space behind the doors will be used for other purposes, the garage door openings can be filled in with panels resembling garage doors but they can be fixed in place. They are not to be filled in with other material such as glass block or concrete block. Steel bar security doors and window guards are generally not allowed. If permitted, the doors or grates shall be of the simplest design and installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible. Historic Preservation staff will assist in finding appropriate pedestrian and garage-style doors.

4 DOORS AT THE SIDES AND REAR

The north elevation is very visible to the public. A utilitarian rectangular opening has been cut into this façade, near the rear of the building on the first story. This opening can remain if useful to the future owner. A smaller rectangular pedestrian door is located at the second story and is equipped with a metal fire escape. This door is not original and has been cut into what was an arched opening. This door can remain if needed by the future owner. If not needed for fire exit purposes, it can be bricked in and the metal fire escape removed. Any new entrance would have to respect the scale and detail of the building.

The rear exit is enclosed by a flat roofed vinyl clad structure. This structure can be removed and an opening constructed that is appropriate for the building.

The south elevation is barely visible owing to the proximity of the adjacent building. If there are original door openings they can be retained. If there is a need to permanently close up any entrances, it can be done using cream colored brick and leaving a slight reveal to indicate that a door had been there.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design, color and appearance. Unique ornamentation and trim should be spot repaired with material that matches the original (same wood species, same type of metal, etc.) or with epoxies designed to work with the original material. Wholesale removal and replication of ornamentation is not recommended.

E. Additions

Given the location of the building and the fact that it occupies most of its property, no additions are recommended for the property. Any proposed addition would need to be reviewed by Historic Preservation staff. Ideally an addition should either compliment

or have a neutral effect upon the historic character of the building. Additions must be smaller than the building and not obscure the historic building. Factors to be taken into consideration are the proposed addition's height, roof configuration, fenestration, scale, design, materials, and whether it intrudes upon the principal elevations.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign or light fixture shall be compatible with the historic era of the building. Historic Preservation can assist with appropriate lighting and signage. Plastic internally illuminated box signs are not permitted.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, paving, fencing, or accessory structures like sheds or garages, garden lights, gates and other elements shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building.

It is required that the aggressive vines growing along the south side of the building and spreading to the front façade be removed. They are damaging the masonry along with the mortar. Any volunteer trees or shrubs along the south elevation should also be removed.

H. Guidelines for Demolition

No portions of the building may be removed or demolished, except those proven to be later, non-contributing additions such as the shed-like covering of an entrance at the rear.

The building cannot be demolished for new construction.